

A FEW WEEKS AGO, MY DENOMINATION HELD A LARGE CEREMONY CALLED THE MASS OF THE SEA SERVICES IN A LARGE BASILICA NEAR GETTYSBURG.

DUE TO A HORRIBLE ACCIDENT, TRAFFIC WAS HORRENDOUS, AND I DID NOT ARRIVE AT THE BASILICA UNTIL ABOUT 5 MINUTES BEFORE THE CEREMONY. EVERYONE WAS VESTED AND LINED UP... AND SO I QUICKLY PUT ON MY VESTMENTS AND RAN TO THE PROCESSION LINE. THE NAVAL ACADEMY CHOIR BEGAN THE OPENING HYMN AND THE PROCESSION OF FOUR STAR, THREE STAR, A RETIRED CNO, FORMER CABINET MINISTERS... AND THE CLERGY BEGAN THEIR PROCESSION UP THE CENTER AISLE.

AS I PROCESSED INTO THE CHURCH, SOMEONE GRABBED THE BACK OF MY VESTMENT AND SAID... DON'T PROCESS IN, YOU WAIT HERE. AND THEN THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES APOLOGETICALLY SAID, THE ARCHBISHOP JUST CALLED... HE'S CAUGHT IN THE TRAFFIC 50 MILES AWAY AND CANNOT GET HERE FOR THE CEREMONY. HE SAID, YOU'D FILL IN AND YOU'D DO A FINE JOB. AND SO, A BIT SHOCKED, AND TOTALLY UNPREPARED, I PRESIDED OVER THIS CEREMONY FOR THESE VIPs AND ALMOST A THOUSAND PEOPLE... AND... FELT ESPECIALLY UNPREPARED WHEN IT CAME TIME FOR THE ANNUAL SERMON... WHICH I'M SURE THE ARCHBISHOP AND HIS STAFF HAD WORKED FOR WEEKS ON... AND WAS SITTING ON THE FRONT SEAT OF HIS CAR... AND WAS NOT IN THE PULPIT.

WHEN I SHARED THE HORROR OF THAT MOMENT WITH OUR CHIEF THE NEXT MORNING, BARRY BLACK... WHO COULD READ THE PHONE BOOK AND MAKE IT SOUND INSPIRED, REMARKED... LOU, YOU'RE ALWAYS A BETTER SPEAKER WHEN YOU WING IT... FOR YOUR SAKE, I HOPE HE'S RIGHT, BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW I'D BE SPEAKING TODAY UNTIL SATURDAY AFTERNOON WHEN I ARRIVED.

A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO THE RESIDENTS OF A FARMING COMMUNITY, HENNING, MINNESOTA, DECIDED TO BUILD A NEW CHURCH... TO REPLACE THEIR OLD CLAPBOARD CHAPEL WITH A NEW CHAPEL BUILT OF FIELD STONES... A COMMODITY IN GREAT SUPPLY IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

THE FARMERS SCOURED THEIR LANDS FOR FIELD STONES, AND OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR, THE FARMERS GATHERED THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF FIELD STONES... IN A REAL LABOR OF LOVE.

WHEN THEY FELT THEY HAD ENOUGH TO BEGIN THE CONSTRUCTION, THE TOWNSPEOPLE HIRED A STONEMASON.

THE STONEMASON MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE THOUSANDS OF FIELDSTONES THAT HAD BEEN METICULOUSLY COLLECTED BY THE

FARMERS. HE PROCEEDED TO REJECT ABOUT 2/3 OF THE FIELD-STONES THAT HAD BEEN COLLECTED.

THE FARMERS GOT VERY UPSET... AND COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE REJECTED WHAT THEY CONSIDERED TO BE PERFECTLY GOOD STONES. AND THEY WORRIED THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHAPEL WOULD BE DELAYED.

THE STONEMASON DEFENDED HIS ACTIONS AND SAID THAT HE HAD SEPARATED THE DEAD FIELD STONES FROM THE LIVING STONES.

HE SAID HE NEEDED LIVING STONES... STONES THAT A STONEMASON COULD EASILY WORK WITH... STONES THAT COULD BE SHAPED BY POUNDING WITH A TROWEL... STONES THAT COULD BE SPLIT INTO ANY SIZE NEEDED... STONES THAT... ONCE STACKED ONE UPON THE OTHER, WOULD BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE STRONG AND STURDY WALLS OF THE CHAPEL.

OUR COUNTRY IS IN A STATE OF WAR... AND WE NEED CHAPLAINS... WE NEED CHAPLAINS WHO ARE LIVING STONES... I NEED SENIOR CHAPLAINS ON THE USMC SIDE OF THE HOUSE WHO CAN BE MOULDED.... TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

WELL, FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO'VE DROPPED OUT OF THE WORLD OR HAVE BEEN HIDING IN A RETREAT HOUSE OR AN OLD FALL OUT SHELTER, THE WAR DRUMS HAVE BEEN BEATING LOUDLY, AND BEATING STRONGLY. AND WHILE TALKING HEADS ON TELEVISION AND ACADEMICIANS AT OUR UNIVERSITIES AND IN OUR DENOMINATIONS DEBATE WHETHER A PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE MEETS THE CRITERIA FOR A JUST WAR... THE AMERICAN MILITARY HAS QUIETLY AND EFFICIENTLY PREPARED ITSELF TO FOLLOW WHATEVER ORDERS ARE GIVEN BY OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

CICERO AND THE ROMANS USED THE EXPRESSION SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM... IF YOU WANT PEACE, PREPARE FOR WAR... AND SO OUR MILITARY STANDS READY AND PREPARED TO DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION, DEFEND THE VALUES THAT OUR COUNTRY STANDS FOR, AND DEFEND ITS FELLOW CITIZENS, NO MATTER WHAT THE CALL FROM THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF.

---WE HAVE THE PROFESSIONAL WARRIORS TO DO THE JOB

---WE HAVE THE BEST MILITARY TOYS AND TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE ON THE PLANET...

---AND WE HAVE THE BEST OPERATIONS PLANNERS AND INTEL THAT WE'VE HAD IN YEARS.

SO WHAT'S LEFT FOR THE CHAPLAINS TO DO...

BESIDES MAKING SURE THAT OUR MARINES AND SAILORS ARE PERSONALLY READY TO DEPLOY...

BESIDES MAKING SURE THE FAMILIES OF OUR TROOPS ARE READY FOR THEIR DEPLOYMENT...

BESIDES ENSURING THAT OUR EQUIPMENT AND ECCLESIASTICAL SUPPLIES ARE READY...

BESIDES ENSURING THAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO WORK AS A TEAM ONCE WE GET TO WHERE WE'RE GOING...

WHAT IS LEFT TO DO... BESIDES TO PRAY FOR A JUST AND LASTING PEACE, AND FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR PEOPLE, AND THE INNOCENTS OF THOSE COUNTRIES WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE IN? WHERE SHOULD CHAPLAINS AND RELIGIOUS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION, NOW?

FIRST, LET ME SUGGEST THAT WE FOCUS FIRST ON OURSELVES... ARE WE SPIRITUALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY READY TO COMPLETE THE MISSION AHEAD? ARE WE READY TO BE THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS WE NEED TO BE ONCE THE BALLOON GOES UP? ARE WE SPIRITUALLY READY TO HEAD INTO COMBAT WITH THESE WARRIORS AND TO KEEP THEM FOCUSED, KEEP THEM HUMANE IN THEIR WARFIGHTING... KEEP THEM HUMAN IN ONE OF THE MOST INHUMAN OF ALL OUR ACTIVITIES... ARE WE READY SPIRITUALLY READY TO GIVE UP OUR LIFEJACKETS... LIKE THE FOUR CHAPLAINS, OR TO GO IN HARMS WAY WITH A PLATOON LIKE CAPODANNO, OR TO CLOSE THE HATCH ON OURSELVES TO SAVE THE LIVES OF SHIPMATES LIKE SCHMIDT ON DECEMBER 7, 1941... OR TO SHOW THE BRAVERY AND LEADERSHIP OF A RENTZ ... OR DISPLAY THE TAKE CHARGE SPIRIT OF AN O'CALLAHAN ON THE FRANKLIN, OR GIVE UP A HELICOPTER FLIGHT OUT OF HELL...AND RISK OUR OWN LIFE IN THE PROCESS LIKE A BRETT OR HIS CHAPLAINS' ASSISTANT.... CORPORAL ALEXANDER CHIN?

ARE WE READY TO WORK PROFESSIONALLY... IN OTHER WORDS... TO WORK TOGETHER TO MEET THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL NEEDS OF THE

MISSION BY WORKING TOGETHER AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE SAME GOD? ARE WE READY TO PUT OUR DIFFERENCES BEHIND US... ARE WE READY TO STOP THE INFIGHTING, TO PUT ASIDE THE PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSIES... TO PUT ASIDE OUR OWN NEEDS... AND FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE?

MOST JUST WAR THEORISTS ERRONEOUSLY POINT TO AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO AS THE FATHER OF JUST WAR THEORY. TRUTH IS, BETWEEN 700 AND 400 BC THE GREEKS DEVELOPED A THEORY OF JUST WAR IN THEIR KOINA NOMINA... OR COMMON CUSTOMS.... THE ISRAELITES OFFERED THEIR SUGGESTIONS ON JUST WAR IN THE 20TH THROUGH 23RD CHAPTERS OF DEUTERONOMY... AND THE GREEK PHILOSOPHER PLATO AND THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER CICERO OFFERED THEIR STRUCTURES FOR A THEORY OF JUST WAR CENTURIES BEFORE AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO WAS EVEN BORN...

BUT WHILE AUGUSTINE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT JUST WAR... HE WAS NOT MERELY CONCERNED WITH THE PARAMETERS OR JUS AD BELLUM CRITERIA UNDER WHICH WARS COULD BE JUSTLY DECLARED....

AUGUSTINE WAS MORE CONCERNED WITH WHAT WARS DO TO PEOPLE. IN ESSENCE... RATHER THAN OFFERING A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO JUST WAR, AUGUSTINE OFFERED CIVILIZATION INSIGHTS ON THE PASTORAL DIMENSIONS OF JUST WAR... FOR, AS A SURVIVOR OF WAR, AUGUSTINE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH WHAT WAR DID TO PEOPLE, NOT JUST THE COMPONENTS OF JUST WAR.

AUGUSTINE WRITES TO HIS FRIEND FAUSTUS:

WARS RESULT IN A LOVE OF VIOLENCE, REVENGEFUL CRUELTY, FIERCE AND IMPLACABLE ENMITY, WILD RESISTANCE.... AND THE LUST FOR POWER.

AUGUSTINE WROTE ON ALL ASPECTS OF WARFARE FROM A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT. HE DEVOTED A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF HIS WRITING TO OUTLINING THE VIRTUES THAT CHARACTERIZE THE TRUE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR....

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ADVISOR...

CORE VALUES... VIRTUES... CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

WELL, IF THE AFRICAN BISHOP, AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, WAS NOT SO TIED UP RUNNING HIS OWN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND WRITING VOLUMES

FOR POSTERITY... I'D SAY, IN HIS HEART... AUGUSTINE WAS REALLY JUST A FRUSTRATED MILITARY CHAPLAIN.

AUGUSTINE WOULD HAVE LOVED TO SERVE AS A MILITARY CHAPLAIN... HE WOULD HAVE LOVED TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OFFER MORAL/ETHICAL ADVICE IN THE CHAOS AND FOG OF WAR...

HE WOULD HAVE LOVED TO BE ABLE TO SERVE AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER TO TROOPS INTENT ON BUILDING THE PEACE IN A JUST WORLD...

HE WOULD HAVE LOVED BEING A TEACHER IN THE AREA OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AND CORE VALUES... TO DEVELOP THE VIRTUE OF EACH OF HIS TROOPS... AND TO HAVE HELPED THEM MAINTAIN THEIR HUMANITY IN THE INHUMANITY AND THE FOG OF WAR.

BUT AUGUSTINE WAS NEVER GIVEN THAT OPPORTUNITY... BUT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THAT OPPORTUNITY AS MILITARY CHAPLAINS IN THIS TIME OF WAR... AUGUSTINE WOULD HAVE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS MIGHT HAVE IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD. HE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE THAT A WAR REMAINED JUST... BUT WE HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY TODAY.

LET'S PRAY THAT WE MAINTAIN OUR FOCUS AS SPIRITUAL LEADERS
LET'S PRAY THAT WE MAINTAIN OUR FOCUS AS PROFESSIONAL
NONCOMBATANTS... IF WE ARE CHAPLAINS, AND COMBATANTS IF WE
ARE RPS....

THAT GOD MAY GIVE US THE SPIRITUAL DEPTH AND FOCUS TO
SPIRITUALLY LEAD OUR PEOPLE IN WAR...

THAT GOD MAY GIVE US THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE TO ADVISE WELL
IN THE COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF WAR

AND THAT GOD MIGHT GIVE US THE STRENGTH TO HEAL AND GROW AS A
CORPS OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS, COMMITTED TO THE DICTATES OF
OUR FAITH, AND RESOLVED TO MINISTER TOGETHER TO MEET THE NEEDS
OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, IN PEACE, IN WAR, AND EVEN IN DEATH. AMEN.